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SUBJECT: Somalia - Internationals and Somalis Meet on Humanitarian, Security Situation

REF: Nairobi 2182

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1) SUMMARY: The International Contact Group (ICG) for Somalia met on September 17 in Djibouti on the eve of a second round of talks between the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS). Both the Somali Prime Minister and opposition leader addressed the ICG, promising to make concrete progress on implementing the June 9 Djibouti peace agreement, to expand humanitarian access, and to combat piracy. ICG internal discussions centered on the Somalis' capacity to implement a cease fire, the worsening humanitarian situation, and progress on instituting the Transitional Federal Charter. END SUMMARY.

12. On September 17 members of the International Contact Group for Somalia (ICG) met in Djibouti to discuss the political, security and humanitarian situation in Somalia (reftel). The meeting took place on the eve of the second round of talks between the Joint High Level and Security Committees. It was the first meeting under the auspices of the SRSG who assumed the ICG mantle from the co-founders United States and Norway following the April Oslo meeting. Participants included the UN, African Union, European Commission, European Union Council Secretariat, Presidency of European Union (France), IGAD, League of Arab States, Organization of Islamic Conference, World Bank, Canada, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Italy, Kenya, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States. The ICG asked TFG Prime Minister Nur Hassan Hussein and Deputy Prime Minister Ahmed Abdisalam Adan, and ARS leaders Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden to address the ICG as one entity, behind a single "Somalia" nameplate. The significance of this was not lost on the gathering; earlier this year the ARS and TFG had refused to meet face to face.

13. After the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) Ahmed Ould-Abdullah and the Djiboutian Foreign Minister opened the meeting, Prime Minister Hussein made remarks. He acknowledged the Somali people, as well as the international community, were frustrated by lack of progress on the Djibouti Agreement's implementation. Nevertheless, he was determined that future Joint High Level and Security Committee meetings will be held in Somalia. The PM praised French actions against pirates (Note: That morning French Special Forces had rescued two French hostages and captured or killed the pirates holding them. End Note.) He asked for the international community to continue escorting World Food Programme sea shipments to Somalia (Note: Canada will provide escorts until the end of September. End Note.) (Comment: The PM's remarks, which he read in English, were rambling and disorganized. Several times he lost his place, then repeated himself. End Comment.)

14. By contrast, Sheikh Sharif's remarks were concise and well delivered. Speaking through a translator, Sharif specifically

thanked the SRSB and the United States for their support. He said this week he will work for a joint TFG-ARS humanitarian committee to protect aid officials and assist food deliveries. He also called for joint action on policing, a cease-fire, and piracy. In conclusion, he noted that spoilers would try to exploit the Agreement's setbacks, but with international and Somali cooperation, the Agreement would succeed. Following the opening session which also included remarks from former ICG co-chairs Norway and USA, the TFG and ARS delegations withdrew.

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Security  
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15. AU Special Representative for Somalia, Bwakira, assessed that the security situation was worsening, and unconventional attacks were increasing, both on AU forces and civilians. The ARS, the AU maintained, recognized that a precipitous Ethiopian withdrawal would cause a vacuum. In discussions on the margins, ARS military officials confirmed to poloff they appreciated the need for a scheduled, phased withdrawal. The Arab League and Egypt expressed concern that the ARS lacks command and control of sufficient forces to effect a ceasefire; the SRSB said the ICG should help the ARS leaders go with confidence and be visible in Mogadishu. Ethiopian Ambassador to Djibouti explained that the GOE has done everything they could to provide stability, but a strong UN force should enter Somalia as soon as possible. The French delegate, as EU Presidency, told the ICG military patrols and interdictions could tamp down piracy. He also urged investigating piracy under the UN's Somalia arms embargo, and seizing assets, including ransom money. The Kenyan delegation offered to host and train Somali security forces if the international community will provide funding.

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Humanitarian Situation  
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16. Mark Bowden, UN Resident Humanitarian Coordinator reminded the ICG that the humanitarian situation is dire and worsening. A massive food crisis is affecting 3.2 million Somalis, and expanding from south and central Somalia to the northern regions of Puntland and Somaliland. Twice as much food aid has been distributed this year than last. Food prices have increased by 200 to 700 percent this year due to inflation, drought, and conflict. Violence has displaced 1.1 million Somalis, leaving them vulnerable to shortages of food, water, and essential services. Soup kitchens are feeding 80,000 Somalis per day in Mogadishu. Shrinking humanitarian access to the needy and problems monitoring the delivery of food are compounding the crisis.

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Development Update  
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17. UN Development Program for Somalia Country Director Bruno Lemarquis announced the UNDP and Somali Central Bank had developed a new, accountable system for paying stipends to civil servants and other government officials. (Note: after the July murder of UNDP's Mogadishu Head of Office, the UNDP evacuated the city and suspended stipends to government officials due to lack of oversight. End Note.) The new payment system opens the door to pay stipends to over 2,000 newly trained police who've gone without salaries for months. Lemarquis also noted some progress on transitional charter tasks. Drafting committees had produced an outline for a new constitution, and the ARS would be joining the committees to give input. The ICG agreed that Sweden and Italy would spearhead planning for reconstruction and development conferences for early 2009 to meet the Djibouti Agreement commitment.

18. COMMENT: AS Contact group meetings go, this was fairly unremarkable except that it was SRSB's first Chairing and that it was on eve of TFG/ARS Meetings under Djibouti Agreement and meant to give them a good launch. Despite onerous wrangling on the wording of an over-long Communique, the presence of the International

Community did seem to energize and focus the delegations even though their meetings fell just short of the desired Cesase Fire declaration.

RANNEBERGER